

# Harper Center Bulletin

Williamstown Council on Aging

February 1st, 2012

Harper Center Bulletin # 207

## February 2012 Newsletter

Well, it's February and here we sit in the midst of a premature spring. Maybe not good folks. There are a lot of people out there who believe that it's wonderful to not have snow and cold, wonderful to have smaller heating bills, just all around great. Really? Tell that to any kid who got a new sled for Christmas! Or how about a skier?

All joking aside. Snow is apparently necessary for a healthy planet and everything from tree root health to our water table. It hurts the ski business and those who have seasonal employment plowing or shoveling snow are not happy either. Its absence appears to say that global warming is more than just a myth. On the other hand, municipalities are not losing money on sand and salt or overtime budgets, there have been no bad weather school cancellations and most travel has been uninterrupted. Not to mention smaller heat bills and utility usage in general. Of course there is more to that than we've mentioned here. No snow-good or bad? What do you think? Let us know and we'll comment next month. Our national groundhog in Pennsylvania will be popping up in a few hours to predict the future. We'll see.



### Inside this issue:

Heart Savers	2
Tax Help	2
Managing Medications	2
Avoiding Falls	3
Leaping About	3
Art Expressions	3
Page 4 notes	4

## In February, the Friendship Club Supports...

Food is one of the basics, right? I mean along with air and water, clothing and shelter. We do not really function well without food and in fact long term absence of food leads, to where...?

Considering the importance food security holds in our lives, we should find it amazing that there are people in our community who are not really guaranteed to have three squares daily. We place premiums on all sorts of extraneous things but here there are hungry people too. Yup, in our own back yard. Just ask the folks at the local food pantry, they'll tell you. They exist because there is a need but they can't help without you. Sooo...in February the Friendship Club is asking for donations to be collected here at Harper and donated ultimately to the food pantry

**The Williamstown Council on Aging lives at 118 Church Street in town within the friendly confines of the Harper Center. We're open for business Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 4:00 and Sunday at 11:00 for lunch. You can call us at 458-8250, fax to 458-5156 or email: bogrady@williamstown.net We've been serving seniors and their families since 1966!**

## Heart savers...

We all think that life is important. Think about all the times during the course of a given day when the word life appears somewhere to you, either actually in print or in a conversation. "That's life" has to be one of the most overused phrases in the universe. No doubt about it, that one is a catch all for everything.

But think about it. What else do you have that's really more important? Some would say your health but you cannot have any type of health at all if you're not alive.

So what if you could give life back to someone someday? Oh, I don't mean in the raise someone from the dead sense. None of us can do that. But what about someone who has a heart attack or chokes on their food? Does it matter what age group we're looking at? No, of course not. What if it was you? Would you want help?

Thanks to the generosity of the First Congregational Church of Williamstown's "Helping Hands" program, we have secured a small grant to offer adult and infant CPR classes through the Village Ambulance Company. Those completing the class will be American Heart Association certified life savers. And you'll know how to use an automated defibrillator as well. The class, at 1:00 on February 7, will cost \$10 and we'll recycle the money into more classes. Want to be a life saver? Oh, pizza first, at noon...yeah, an incentive! Sign up now!



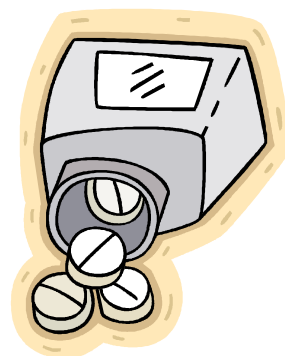
## Tax help...

Well, Newt and Mitt released their taxes and wasn't that something? Just amazing how much money some people can make and get to keep even after they pay Uncle Sammy. We're not interested in helping those two, or anyone anywhere near that kind of income but you can keep some and perhaps get back too! We'll help you figure this out right here at Harper-our AARP Tax Assistance program begins in earnest on Saturday February 4, runs through Saturday April 14 and is totally FREE! {I bet Mitt and Newt had to pay...} Anyway, consultations with our trained and certified AARP Tax Aides are available on Saturday mornings from 9:00 to noon and Tuesday from 6:00 to 9:00. Interested individuals should call us at 458-8250, state their preference for day and time and be ready to spend at least an hour. Bring your 2010 tax returns, all pertinent paperwork for 2011 and we'll e-file your state and federal taxes for you. We pay special attention to senior returns but the program is open to anyone of any age with moderate to lower incomes.



## Managing meds safely

Now this is an astounding statistic; did you know that the misuse of prescription medications costs \$100 BILLION annually? That's more than Mitt and Newt earn in an entire year! Of course, we all know that to be safe and effective, medications need to be taken as directed. Doesn't always happen-it's estimated that 30 to 50 percent of all prescriptions are not taken properly and up to 12 percent of prescriptions go unfilled! And to think that we all wonder sometimes whether we took our pills this morning...But don't take my word for it-on Thursday February 9, our friends Kira and Darlene will be here from Interim Health Care to talk about safe medication management and what we can do if we suspect that someone is mismanaging their meds. So, come in at 1:00, we have a chat about pills and some yummy snacks too!



## Avoiding falls

Oh yes, we all know about falls don't we? Once we had an "avoiding falls" seminar here at Harper and I asked how many people had fallen and just about everyone in the room had fallen at least once sometime or another. Several of you indicated that you had been thru multiple falls, one wit stated that "Oh, I fall all the time" and drew laughs from the assembled. Unfortunately, others indicated that they'd fallen, broken something, were hospitalized, had surgery, and temporarily institutionalized for rehab purposes. Not funny any more, right?

Truth is that falls have been the cause for a very significant number of serious injuries and even death and are the leading cause for unnecessary institutional placement. Whether the culprit behind the fall is poor balance, tripping over ill placed rugs or slipping on slippery stairs, many falls are avoidable. You can wear non skid shoes, toss throw rugs, improve home lighting among other things. Those other things will be the topic of our conversation with the folks from Amedisys Home Health, some new kids in town. You met Editia, the manager, back in early December. She was supposed to come here to do this particular seminar in January but it snowed. So this will be a re-schedule. Hopefully, we'll get through it. Lunch at noon, chicken with gravy, mashed potato and veggies-Tuesday February 21st at 12:30. We hope!



## Leaping about

This is a Leap Year, everyone knows that right? That means that there will be an extra day attached to February to make up for a little time during each year—something about keeping the calendar right. Wonder if the Mayans figured this out too?

Anyway, on Tuesday February 28th, singer/songwriter Bernice Lewis will be at Harper performing familiar favorites and selected originals on her guitar and ukulele. She's been a touring artist for about 30 years, has worked with Rosanne Cash and Peter, Paul and Mary among others. In 2009 was selected as Artist in Residence for the National Park Service. She's performed here at Harper with the Ladies Auxiliary Ukulele Orchestra. We know her and she's really quite good, eh? So, join us at noon on February 28th for pasta and shrimp and a great performance to follow!!



## Art Expressions

Our new friend Meg Greenawalt from Sweetbrook will be here at Harper on Thursday, February 2nd at 1:00 to present another of her trademark fun programs. This one is entitled "Art Expressions". Art Expressions does not really teach art, rather it will encourage and engage participants in watercolor painting, which will result in a delightful group project. All you have to do is bring yourselves, all needed art supplies will be provided. It's guaranteed to be a good time! Of course we'll provide refreshments!

And for those of you who think this might sound familiar, you're right! This program was originally scheduled in December but was cancelled, I think, because of snow...and then it was scheduled in January but was cancelled because of snow. Well, it is winter after all. There seems to be a pattern here and if I were a skier, I would think seriously about inviting her more frequently because she seems to attract snow. Hey, wait, I do ski...





On the web at  
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Aging**

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There are a lot of people who come here to Harper on a fairly regular basis to enjoy the opportunities provided through all the programming we offer here. Unfortunately, not all of our neighbors are able to come in and some of them require extensive care just to remain at home. Some actually need a rather extensive safety net to be safe in the community. Fortunately, there is such a safety net in the our neighborhood. In North Adams, the Brien Center manages an Adult Day Health Program for disabled adults which includes a number of our friends in Williamstown. The ADH Center provides a safe and supportive environment for friends and family while offering a host of other supportive services at the same time. On Thursday afternoon, February 23, Ce Swanson, director of the center will be here at 1:00 to talk about the various opportunities available thru this program. Marion is promising to bake for the event, and I'll think of something equally delightful to provide as a snack. It's a great opportunity to learn about a program which can keep a loved one or a friend safely home.

## Page four news and notes

Our foot care magician, Serena Merrill, will be in the house on Tuesday February 21st to work wonders on your feet, clipping nails, reducing calluses and massaging the soreness out. She's booked for February folks, sign up for March now!

For those of you who have found yourselves to be challenged by the very technical stuff which comprises our health care insurance paperwork system, our health care insurance guru, SHINE Counselor Peg Jenks, will be in the house on Wednesday February 15 at 10:30 to help. Appointments are not necessary but appreciated; Peg is also available for individual consultation outside of normal hours by contacting us in the COA office at 458-8250.

The monthly Blood Pressure clinic-officially sponsored by our friends from Interim Health care will take place on Tuesday February 14, at noon immediately preceding the Friendship Club meeting. Important numbers to know, eh?

Finally, the monthly Brown Bag, sponsored by the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts will be at Harper for pick up or delivery on Friday February 24th.

Brown Bag is literally a brown paper sack filled with self stable foods and fresh fruits and veggies in season. Interested? Contact us here at Harper at 458-8250, and we'll help you thru the minimal applications process!

Happy February!

